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An

Inaugural Essay

On

Acute Hepatitis

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This disease is described by Dr. Cullen, "Fever, tension, and pain either pungent or obtuse in the right hypochondrium, pain at the clavicle, and top of the right shoulder, the patient lying with difficulty on the left side; dyspnoea; a dry cough; vomiting, and hiccup."

All of these symptoms are rarely met with in the same case; it is necessary, however, to mention in the definition of this disease, symptoms which only occasionally attend; because its constant symptoms are not sufficient to distinguish it. On this account some authors rank jaundice among the diagnostic symptoms, but its presence is not sufficiently frequent to assist much in the diagnosis.

The Liver resembling most other parts of the body, is subject to two species of inflammation, the acute and chronic, and it has been generally supposed, that these varieties of the disease consist in fact of a difference in the absolute seat of the inflammation.

It has been suggested by some Physicians,

that the inflammation is of the acute form, when the enveloping membrane of the Liver is affected; and of the chronic, when the parenchyma, or substance of the organ itself is too highly excited; while others have conceived, that the inflammation is of the acute form, when the extremities of the hepatic artery are particularly affected; and of the chronic, when the branches of the hepatic vein, or vena porta (which conveys the principle portion of blood to the Liver) is the seat of morbid action; it is of very little importance, however, in a practical point of view, which of these opinions is correct.

The acute species, by its active operation, and rapid influence, unless quickly counteracted, soon prostrates the energies of life; the chronic by its slow and insidious progress, gives a check to the enjoyment of health, and gradually undermines the constitution, without immediate alarm, until the evil has proceeded so far as too often

to baffle recovery. To the former, or acute form of this disease, I shall limit this essay.

Independent of the causes producing other inflammations, such as the application of cold, external injuries from contusions or blows &c. this disease may be occasion'd by violent exercise, by intense summer heats, by long continued intermittent, and remittent fevers, by high living, and an intemperate use of vinous and spirituous liquors, but more particularly the latter; (perhaps there is no other of the phlegmasia, so frequently excited by the use of spirituous liquors, as Hepatitis; its frequency in India is ascribed by Bontius, and others, to the general use of arrack.) the various solid concretions of the Liver, are also ranked among the causes of this disease.

In warm climates, this viscus is more apt to be affected, than any other part of the body; probably, as supposed by Dr. Thomas, from the increased secretion of

bile which takes place, when the blood is thrown on the internal parts, by an exposure to cold, or from the bile becoming acid, and thereby exciting an irritation in the part. Dr. Johnson ascribes it to cutaneo-hepatic sympathy &c. This disease is more frequent in warm, than in the cold or temperate climates.

The symptoms of Acute Hepatitis, generally commence with rigors, or shiverings followed by a pungent pain in the right side, which is felt also under the margin of the ribs, shooting more particularly in the direction of the back, and to the shoulder blade; cough; oppression in the respiration, nausea, sickness often with a vomiting of apparently bilious matter, accompanied with considerable fever; great watchfulness, and occasional delirium; extreme thirst, the tongue generally covered with a white crust, extending also to the mouth, and fauces; dejection of spirits; sometimes hiccup; loss of appetite,

and difficulty of lying, except on the opposite side; yet instances now and then occur, where the patient is unable to lie on either side; pressure also on the region of the liver, when there is usually some tension, induces considerable increase of pain, and tendency to cough; and the cough is more generally dry than moist; the bowels are frequently irregular, though oftener slow than otherwise; the urine secreted in small quantities is of a dark colour and often tinged with bile and attended with a scalding sensation; the pulse is full, and strong, sometimes exceeding one hundred and twenty strokes in a minute, at times intermitting. [illegible] occasionally attended with a [illegible] coming from the lungs, [illegible] with the common cause of [illegible] & the presence of the inflammation [illegible] vertebrae. –

In this disease, as with all other [illegible] do not always [illegible] the symptoms of

the same degree of acuteness, as in the three cases. In some cases the pain is acute in other scarcely perceptible; in some instances the pain is acute and violent. In other affections of pain have been found in each case the pain was that felt. But in every inflammation of the liver it may be observed that the symptoms are more or less acute according to the degree of sensibility in the part affected. When the membranous covering of its superior convex part, or the ligaments which unite it to the diaphragm, is inflamed the pain, fever, and difficulty of breathing are much more violent than when its interior glandular substance, or its concave inferior part is affected.

Both ancient and modern nosologists have drawn a distinction between the symptoms that occur when the inflammation occupies the convex surface of the liver, and those that are present when the disease affects the concave. "It seems

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] then acrid bile, by [illegible] or change the condition of the ali-mental membrane of the [illegible] and than the [illegible] of the [illegible].

[illegible] the [illegible] and with extreme violence, the increased secretion of bile is sometimes thrown into the [illegible] producing [illegible] considerable derangement in the [illegible] of the [illegible]. In most cases, the [illegible] of bile is [illegible] though its passage into the duodenum is often [illegible], the [illegible] jaundice is the consequence.

[illegible] [illegible] of an immediate nature, seldom attend this disease. Hemorrhage from the nose, or hemorrhoidal vessels, as likewise [illegible], diarrhoea [illegible] [illegible] of urine [illegible] a copious sediment sometimes carry it off.

In some [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] to cease on the appearance of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

This disease is frequently [illegible] [illegible] pneumonia. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

into the stomach by the collapsing of the countenance; by the cough being immediately accompanied by expectoration; and by a less degree of depression. It may also be distinguished from inflammation of the stomach or mucous membrane, by the absence of those gastric irritation, and sensibility which render gastritis so dangerous and distressing a complaint. The febrile symptoms, too, are less marked than those of that low or typhoid type, attending gastric inflammation.

From spasm of the biliary ducts, occasioned by impacted calculi, we may distinguish this disease by the strong febrile excitement, and many other circumstances, especially at the beginning; that, as Dr Johnson has observed, spasms will often terminate in, or rather occasion inflammation, when the treatment must be the same as in original hepatitis.

In forming our prognosis of this disease, we consider as the most favorable

injury, a gradual abatement of the previous symptoms; an improvement in the complexion, the strength not much reduced by the remedies, return of the appetite, and an increase in the bulk of the body.

But on the other hand, intensity of pain in the region of the liver, a full and frequent pulse, considerable heat, thirst, dry skin, costiveness, and frequent injury denote the most imminent danger.

When suppuration has taken place, this indicates a diminution of pain, weight in the organ, increase of the evening paroxysm of fever, flushings of the countenance, propensity to night sweats, and other hectic symptoms. Continual rigors, cold extremities, and a sinking pulse indicate great danger.

Post mortem examinations often discover the liver much enlarged, and hard to the touch, its colour more or less a deep purple, its vessels, and its membranes more or less affected by inflammation. They also

discover adhesions to the neighbouring parts; also tubercles, hydatids, and sometimes large abscesses containing a considerable quantity of pus; Biliary calculi are now and then met with. In a few instances, the liver has been found in a pulped state resembling a honeycomb.

In communicating the treatment of any disease, general principles can alone be given; in many instances, certain varieties occur, requiring in their application, judgement, experience, and observation; a precise mark of proceeding cannot therefore be laid down, adapted to each constitution, and habit; hence much must be left to the discretion of every practitioner.

In the treatment of acute abdominal the usual means of obviating inflammation, are to be vigorously pursued, by tenaciously adhering to the antiphlogistic regimen.

General, and copious bleedings having been premised, topical depletion should

be merely resorted to, this is to be effected either, by cupping, or the application of leeches over the region of the liver. Should the severity of the pain, and the increased vascular action, continue unabated, venesection should be repeated again very soon; for no time is to be spared, in arresting the progress of this violently acute stage of the disease. By neglecting to bleed under such circumstances, there will be the danger of suppuration coming.

General bleeding in this disease, has been disapproved by some authors, and local depletion by cupping, or leeches recommended in its place; this may be the correct practice in those cases unattended with much pain, or pyrexia, or where the disease has followed a bad intermittent, or remittent fever, and the patient consequently left in a cachectic state, but in those where the pain is acute, the pulse full and strong, and the debility thirst, and heat considerable, copious, and

repeated venesection at an early period of the disease will be necessary; the blood should be drawn away at once, in a quantity proportioned to the age and temperament of the patient, and urgency of the symptoms; it should also be evacuated "plenorivo"; as physicians have at all times noticed the effect of detracting blood from a large orifice in inflammatory diseases.

As co-operating to the same end, Cathartics are advantageously used in this disease; to the mercurial, I should give the preference; they should be early, and freely administered, and every available means exerted, to emulge the liver of its bilious secretions.

The exhibition of Cathartics, should not, however supersede the use of copious mild enemata, which are particularly serviceable, both as a fomentation, and a means of removing irritation, and supporting a discharge from the intestines. No fomentations have been more frequently employed in this disease, than in most of the phlegmasia,

and often attended with considerable advantage; in some of severe cases, the warm bath has been adopted.

Should the symptoms continue unabated, after the adoption of these measures, the application of a large blister should be made over the region of the liver, and should leave a disposition to heat prematurely to the desired intention, it should be reapplied; and all writers on the subject, recommend a repetition of blisters, in preference to supporting a discharge from the same one, by any stimulating ointment.

To these more active measures, should be united the liberal use of Refrigerants, such as solutions of the neutral salts &c; the free admission of cool air into the apartment of the patient; and in this, as in the commencement of all acute diseases, a farinaceous or gruel diet should be rigidly enjoined, and animal food positively and unyieldingly forbidden.

In this conjuncture, the application of leeches often proves serviceable; and as in other inflammatory

complaint, a diaphoresis may be excited, by nauseating doses of Tartarized Antimony, to which we may sometimes unite with advantage, the nitrate of Potash. As an auxiliary, the pediluvium, with a free employment of mild diluent, and cooling liquids have been recommended.

The treatment ought to be pursued with such modifications, as the condition and advancement of the case require.

Should considerable irritability present after the active employment of the means for subduing inflammation, advantage may be derived, from the union of some mild sedative and anodyne medicine.

A recovery will generally be secured, by pursuing this mode of treatment; making such alterations in the regimen &c. as the improvement of the constitution, and the ability of the digestive organs, will admit of; never remembering, that the diet should be of the mildest description, even long after convalescence has been established, otherwise, considerable

risk of a reproduction of the inflammatory excitement will be incurred; as soon as possible, however, without risking the danger of a relapse, some medicines, together with an invigorating diet, and wine, are to be employed; for few complaints leave behind them, more languor, and debility; at the same time, the necessity of strictly avoiding all the exciting causes should be rigidly enjoined on the patient.

Such is the most approved practice recommended in the cure of Acute Hepatitis. "Yet should it, from extraordinary obstinacy, "or defective practice - says Professor Chapman, "prove refractory to the remedies mentioned, then "a thorough mercurial course only can be "trusted. All other modes of treatment, "in confirmed Hepatitis, are only feeble "temporizings, or dangerous tampering's."-

Should we wish the mercurial impression to be soon induced - we may employ mercury internally as well as externally; and to make its effects the more certain, we may unite small portions of Opium with it. - -

I have thus finished a short essay on Acute Hepatitis; - and that it must be deficient in perspicuity of style, and unadorned with the elegance of language, I am fully aware; but I believe, as far as I have been able to obtain information on the subject - it embraces the true symptoms, pathology, and treatment of the disease; and this is all I aimed at.

I will therefore conclude, by acknowledging, how much I feel myself indebted to the Professors of this University, individually, for the valuable instruction received from them, and that they may long enjoy, the honor, prosperity, and happiness so justly due to their unrivalled exertions, in disseminating knowledge, so highly beneficial to mankind, is my sincere wish. —